

**Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity
Monday, October 3, 2005**

Minutes

Present: Ray Plaza, Cynthia Bonner (for Zenobia Hikes), Craig Brians, LaChelle Waller, Michael Goode, Jean Brickey, Ross Edmonds, Susan Willis-Walton, Edd Sewell, Richard Benson, Linda Woodard, Ann Kilkelly, Aaren Salido, Carlos Evia, Rick Shingles (for Susan Anderson), Marilyn Kershaw, Sam Camden, Kevin McDonald, Maxine Lyons, Valerie Hardcastle, Sue Ellen Crocker, Kris Tilley-Lubbs, Ellen Cianelli (for Ellen Plummer), Kim Beisecker

Absent: Tina Harvey, Sumeet Bagai, Kris Tilley-Lubbs, Pat Hyer, Tapsavi Bhargava (for Aisia Haque)

Guests: Susanna Rinehart, Laura Gillman, Akilah Chopfield, Chad Disharoon

I. Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was approved as presented.

II. Chair Report

This Friday is the deadline to apply to be considered as a member of the 4th class of Multicultural Fellows. The first planning meeting for the MLK Day Celebration is scheduled for Wednesday, October 5 at 3:00 p.m. in the President's Board Room. Ray will facilitate the first meeting and expects that the CEOD task force will take over for subsequent meetings. Two copies of the President's response to the Lee Hall recommendations were passed around for members to review.

III. Vice Chair Process

Ray passed out a sheet outlining four options regarding the vice-chair process. These included: vice-chair elected and automatically assume role of chair for the 2006-07 year, vice-chair elected for the academic year and only open to faculty and staff, vice-chair elected for academic year and open to any members, and no vice-chair is elected. The role of the vice-chair was reviewed again. Ruth Grene shared that the first option is a good one since it provides training for an individual before assuming the role of chair. It was also suggested that rather than the vice-chair automatically assuming the role of chair that there be an election each spring. Students shared that since they cannot serve as chair, then the value of serving as vice-chair is diminished. It was determined that in order for a student to serve as a chair, the commission would have to make a resolution to change the by-laws. Ray would need to investigate to see what the process would require. Ellen Cianelli suggested perhaps there could be co-vice-chairs with one being a student and the other a faculty or staff member. Craig asked if the election of chairs could be done at this meeting. There was some concern over giving individuals time to consider whether or not they are able to serve in that role. Edd moved that the commission elect co-vice-chairs, one student and one faculty/staff pending further review for this year with the process done electronically before the end of the month. The motion passed.

IV. Presentation from Officers from LGBTA

Michael Sutphin and Curtis Dahn shared that LGBTA members have experienced many issues/instances of harassment. They went to a number of university offices over the course of last year and did not receive any information on how to deal with the fact that their fliers were consistently being taken down during a certain period of time in specific locations. Additionally, their office door has been vandalized on more than one occasion. However, it is not the specific incidents that bother them the most but the overall campus climate. Michael gave a speech at the Celebration of Diversity basically saying the administration did not appear to care about the campus climate relative to the LGBT community. The provost called an emergency meeting to discuss these issues. There was a follow-up meeting which created two groups.

The smaller administrative group came up with the SAFE WATCH program with some proposals and a centralized way to report harassment on-line and anonymously. There was also a telephone line individuals could call to report harassment. The larger student group is meeting regularly to continue to work on these issues. They are concerned about the responses or lack of responses from the Residence Life Department. There were repeated incidents in the Residence Hall. The RA did talk with some of the students involved, but there were no Judicial Referrals made. They feel there is a need for greater training for resident advisors, not just related to sexual orientation, but also related to other underrepresented groups.

The second department that the students feel is not supportive is the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets. A member asked about the status of recreating a Dean of Students Office. Cynthia confirmed that such a proposal does exist and might be able to provide some of the infrastructure that seems to be lacking. The LGBTA recommendations include to: fully support SAFE WATCH, create tailored responses to specific incidents, house the program somewhere so there is continuity, and finally review policies as related to the two offices. Ross, on behalf of the LGBT caucus, shared that this is not just a student issue. The caucus has been concerned for some time. This commission needs to look at this very closely. Ray shared that there is a task force in the commission focusing on campus climate to include LGBT issues.

V. Task Force Membership and Charges

A handout was distributed with the task force membership and any additional items submitted by members. The meeting on October 17 will be a time for the task forces to meet. Kim suggested that during the course of the regular meetings, there need to be continual updates so that task forces can be informed on what each is doing. Task force updates will be added as a standing item on the agenda.

VI. Campus Climate

The sense is that only the students affected or active are the ones who are aware of the issues. Edd added that there is no faculty climate since there is no place for them to meet. There are questions about how the restructuring has affected campus climate. There is a perception that our awareness is increased, but Ann noted some concern regarding what she saw as a decrease in representation on a P & T committee at the university. There needs to be a better way of reporting issues related to campus climate.

VII. Announcements

On October 20 from 11:30-1:30 there is a Multicultural Staff luncheon in conjunction with Staff Senate with new multicultural staff as a welcome to the university. It is sponsored by the Office of Multicultural Affairs, Human Resources, and the Staff Senate. Invitation are forthcoming. Kris shared that Enrique Escorza, Consul General for Mexico, is interested in having a conversation about the following topics: the Mexican presence in the Commonwealth and possibilities for collaborative research between the Mexican government and Virginia Tech regarding the Mexican presence in the Commonwealth. Any faculty or staff interested in joining this conversation is welcome to attend a meeting this Monday, October 10 from 10-12.

Meeting adjourned 12:00 noon